

The Second Exodus (Part Three)

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What a miraculous occasion it will be when the modern peoples of Israel realize who they are! The idea that the "Lost Ten Tribes of Israel" can be found in Western nations is highly unpopular today. Those in the West who have even heard of it put this notion somewhere between uneducated, wild-eyed fanaticism at best—and racism at worst.

This is assuredly not common knowledge today, and clearly, the peoples of Israel do not *want* to believe the historical fact of their ancestry. As with the rest of God's truth that is rejected by carnal man, Israelites believe what they have been conditioned to believe (Ephesians 2:1-3) and what they *want* to believe.

An individual's belief in his physical descent from Israel is highly unpopular, at least in part, because when he accepts it, he must also accept the requirements and obligations that come with it. How often do Protestant leaders—many of whom are Israelites—make statements such as, "Only the Jews have to keep the law; Christians are under grace"? In these words, they misunderstand the intent of the law as well as the identity of God's physical people today. This predisposition, even among the religious, is so set against the reality of where God's people are that it will take something extraordinary for the scales to be stripped from their eyes. Atheists and secularists will take even more convincing, because they do not believe in God or the Bible in the first place.

Somehow, though, this knowledge will be restored to Israel, or at least to the remnant. We know from Israel's history that she does not like being called into account or told things that are inconvenient or that would cause her to have to change. This is why, more often than not, she killed the prophets, the messengers God sent to warn or to instruct. It usually took something calamitous—like captivity or subjugation—before the Israelites would relent and listen to God.

Perhaps this is part of the reason Jacob's Trouble will be so severe, and why Jesus describes it as a time of "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time" (Matthew 24:21). Israelites are a tough people to crack, especially as they have become more secular, and it will take a tremendous amount of distress for them to let go of their worldly predispositions and accept God's Word.

A Changed People

However, Jeremiah 31:7-11, describing the Second Exodus, shows that, one way or another, this will take place. Israel is again ransomed from the hand of someone stronger, just as in the original Exodus. Similarly, Jeremiah 30:8 foretells that God will "break his yoke from [Israel's] neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them." Isaiah 10:20 adds that "such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth."

The Israelites return with weeping and with pleas for mercy (Jeremiah 31:9; 50:4). The Tribulation has humbled them, and now they can see both how they have fallen short and what is expected of them. They are broken through destruction, so at last, reconciliation with God can occur. They finally

recognize that they *need* God, a concept totally foreign in the nations of Israel today. God will once again be their Father, rather than being rejected and estranged as He is today. Ephraim will resume his place as God's son. (Ephraim was the leading tribe in the north, and thus often represents all of the northern ten tribes.)

Jeremiah 31:18-21 describes this change of heart:

I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained bull; restore me, and I will return, for You are the LORD my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth." Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD. Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities.

Notice how different verses 18-19 sound from anything being spoken by the peoples of Israel today. After Jacob's Trouble, Israel will actually grieve and moan due to the correction she receives. She will *beg* to be brought back to God. Verse 20 shows the unmistakable compassion and feeling that God has for His people, and His determination to lift them out of the pitiful physical and spiritual condition they will be in at that point.

Verse 21 tells of Israel reversing the course of her migration millennia ago, "Set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back. . . ." Israel comes to this condition and pleads for God's restoration *before* she makes the Second Exodus, just as Israel cried out in Egypt to the God of their fathers, and *then* God delivered them. If this is correct, the identity of Israel will be recognized sometime during Jacob's Trouble, but before the Second Exodus takes place.

If the patterns of Israel's history remain consistent, God will remind Israel of her obligation to Him, which will include the knowledge of who Israel is. She will not listen—Israel has rarely listened—so God will cause the nations of Jacob to go through such "trouble" as they have never experienced. Though God does not revel in destruction, He knows best what it will take to turn His people around. In the end, the repentant people who remain will be willingly led back to the Promised Land.

One Nation Again

When God brings back repentant Israel, it will be rejoined with the remnant of Judah under the resurrected King David:

Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.'

"David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore." (Ezekiel 37:21-28; see also Hosea 1:11)

The reconstituted nation of Israel, as well as the Promised Land, will undergo a tremendous restoration:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God. (Amos 9:13-15)

The desert will bloom, the people's hearts will be strengthened, and the sick will be healed (Isaiah 35:1-7). The land will produce abundantly, the people will multiply, and the old cities will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 36:8-12). God will deliver them from their uncleanness, undo the land's desolation, and bless the fruit of the fields and the trees (Ezekiel 36:25-36). Israel will be comforted, be given hope, and will finally call God "My Husband" (Hosea 2:14-16).

Spiritual Reformation

Even more importantly, Israel will undergo a spiritual rejuvenation. Jeremiah 31:31-34 provides an encouraging conclusion to the saga of Israel and Judah once they have repented and returned to the land:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (See also Ezekiel 37:26; Jeremiah 50:5, 20)

These verses, quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:16-17, show that this is the same covenant that the church has already made with God. Rather than doing away with the law of God, the New Covenant gives the people the means, not to merely obey it, but to accept it and make it a part of their lives. God will give the people of Israel and Judah new hearts, and they will finally be able to follow God

consistently and have real relationships with Him. God will forgive their sins, and Israel will finally begin to be the witness to the rest of the world that God intended her to be (see Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Isaiah 62:1-2).

Even though God makes this covenant primarily with Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31), it is not exclusive. Through Isaiah, God shows that Gentiles who submit themselves to Him can and will also make this covenant. Of particular interest is the requirement that the Sabbath be kept by those wishing to do this (Isaiah 56:1-2, 6-8).

Interestingly, despite God bringing the remnant of Israel out of the countries of their scattering and their being ashamed of their conduct, God will further sift His people to ensure that any rebels against Him will not be allowed into the land. Apparently, some will return from captivity but be prohibited from entering the land due to their rebellion (Ezekiel 20:33-34, 37-38).

Finally, Ezekiel 11:17, 19-21 foretells of Israel and Judah receiving from God a new heart—a spiritual heart that will enable them to keep His commandments and statutes:

Therefore say, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.' . . . Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

Throughout its history, the essential difficulty in Israel's relationship with God was one of the heart. God exclaims, "Oh, that they [Israel] *had such a heart* in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). In Hebrews 3:10, God again identifies this problem: "Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray *in their heart*, and they have not known My ways'" (emphasis ours throughout).

The heart or spirit of a man is the center of his thought, reason, and motivation. Because of human nature, the natural—unconverted—heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). It has an innate, powerful pull toward the self, always making evaluations based on what it perceives as good for the individual regardless of the effect on others. Humanity has had approximately 6,000 years of such self-centered and destructive living, proving that man is simply unable to govern himself for very long. He needs direction and leadership from another—divine—source.

The Old Covenant that God made with Israel was a *good* agreement as far as it went, because all of God's works are good. The problem was not with its terms, but with the *people* who made it (Hebrews 8:7-8, 10). They lacked the right heart that would have allowed them to follow God truly and obey His laws. God, though, will give a new heart—a new spirit—to repentant Israelites, along with any others who desire to covenant with Him.

This "new spirit" is the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit (see also Jeremiah 32:37-42; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). It is the same spirit that Jesus told His disciples they would receive,

the power that would allow them—through their words and especially through the conduct of their lives—to be witnesses of God (Acts 1:8; see Luke 24:49). It is a spirit "of power and of love and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7)—a mind that is balanced because God's concerns reside at its core. It is a mind inclined to obey God and to seek Him as the only Source of true solutions in a world that does not have the means or inclination to live in a way that is good for everybody and good eternally.

A Model Nation

As Israel becomes God's model nation, due to her new heart and spirit, the rest of the world will see that God's way—including His commandments, statutes, and judgments—produce peace and abundance. It is the nature of God's laws that, because of their Source, they bring good, prosperity, health, abundance, peace, and contentment (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). Yet, it takes the same spirit—heart—as the Lawgiver for one to understand and keep the laws in their true spiritual intent. Israel's godly example will be so striking that the rest of humanity will desire to live the same way and will seek, not only God's laws, but God Himself:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also.' Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD." Thus says the LORD of hosts: "In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8:20-23)

This is also foretold in Ezekiel 37:27-28: "My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. *The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.*"

God, then, will chastise, humble, restore, and bless Israel with a new heart (spirit) so that she can show the rest of the world how to live. Peter writes, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (II Peter 3:9).

Throughout the many prophecies concerning Israel, the faithfulness of God is revealed at every turn. Because of God's faithfulness to His promises, He will act to overshadow the Exodus from Egypt with a Second Exodus. Due to His faithfulness, the tides of history will again turn, and He will redeem His people from the depths of desperation and raise them to new heights. The nations that oppress Jacob will themselves be plundered and enslaved.

Because God is faithful to His purpose for Israel, she will be humbled and brought to repentance. He will not completely destroy her but will do what is necessary to bring her to the spiritual condition and physical location that He planned from the beginning. Though His promises span thousands of years, God's faithful purpose will never fail!